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WOMEN VETERANS HEALTHCARE

The VA has embarked on a major initiative to reach out to women veterans in order to solicit their input on ways to enhance the health care services the VA provides to women veterans.

Representatives at the VA's Health Resource Center (HRC) are placing calls to women veterans nationwide, asking them to share their experiences with the VA and suggest potential enhancements that will further the VA's mission to provide the best care anywhere.

Women veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the veteran population. Of the 22.7 million living veterans, more than 1.8 million are women. They comprise nearly 8 percent of the total veteran population and 6 percent of all veterans who use the VA health care services.

The VA estimates by 2020 women veterans will constitute 10 percent of the veteran population and 9.5 percent of the VA patients. The HRC, which started placing calls on June 1, is contacting women veterans who have enrolled, but have not begun using the VA services.

The HRC representatives making the calls are also informing women veterans about the services the VA offers and quickly connecting them with appropriate departments if they are interested in trying VA health care. Veterans who have complaints about the VA are connected to a patient advocate who helps resolve issues.

The VA has trained professionals in all aspects of women's health, including general primary care, osteoporosis management, heart disease, mental health care, menopausal services and obesity-related issues, such as diabetes. Preventive screenings for breast and cervical cancer are also areas in which the VA excels. Soon, all VA facilities will offer comprehensive primary care for women from a single provider.

The Women Veterans Health Care program has made significant changes in the last few years to enhance the health care offered to eligible women veterans. For more information about VA programs and services for women veterans, please visit: www.va.gov/womenvet and www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth.

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200TH ENGINEER COMPANY DEPLOYS TO AFGHANISTAN

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 200th Engineer Company departed Fort McCoy, WI, last week for a one-year deployment to Afghanistan. The 187-member multi-role bridging unit provides personnel and equipment to transport, assemble, disassemble, retrieve and maintain all standard U.S. Army bridging systems.

The 200th is capable of providing both temporary and permanent bridging solutions over rivers and dry land gaps using its improved ribbon bridge and heavy dry span bridge.

The engineer company, headquartered in Pierre, with detachments in Chamberlain and Mobridge conducted approximately 60 days of pre-mobilization training at Fort McCoy.

Weapons qualification and night-fire training provided additional weapons familiarization and allowed the unit to identify and fix any weapons deficiencies, while convoy operations and IED defeat training presented scenarios the unit may encounter overseas. The unit also spent two weeks at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., training on non-standard bridging systems and operations.

The 200th has been preparing to deploy for more than two years now. They were notified of a possible deployment in April 2009, to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn, but in September 2009, were notified they would not be deploying. In March of 2010, the unit was once again notified they would be deploying, but to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



VA ISSUING FIRST PAYMENTS TO CAREGIVERS

The VA will send out more than \$430,000 in stipend payments to nearly 200 Family Caregivers of veterans in July. These Family Caregivers were the first to complete their Caregiver training under the program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

Family Caregivers will receive an average \$1,600 in monthly stipend payments. The initial payments will average \$2,500 because the first stipend checks are retroactive to the date of application. The amount of the stipend is based on the condition of the veteran and the amount of care they require as well as the geographic location where the veteran resides.

Veterans may review the criteria for eligibility and download the Family Caregiver program application (VA CG 10-10) at www.caregiver.va.gov or they can call the National Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274.



LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO READ?



Recently the *Aberdeen American News* had a feature article about one of South Dakota's dedicated heroes. If you haven't read it — you need to. In an average year, this dedicated hero sews about 200 American flags for the Exchange Club in Aberdeen. The entire article can be viewed at:

<http://www.aberdeennews.com/news/aan-aberdeen-woman-fixes-stars-and-stripes-for-aberdeen-exchange-club-20110703.0.1145064.story>.



The VA's National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder highest priority is to support VA clinicians and veterans through development of evidence-based treatments for PTSD and the dissemination of best practices. The link to their newsletter is noted below.

http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/newsletters/ctu-online/ctu_V5N3.pdf



VA facilities all over the country bear the names of Americans who made significant contributions to their country. Find out who they were by visiting the following link. You can see the history of historical figures for whom some of the VA's national cemeteries are named.

http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/docs/behind_the_names.pdf



The United We Serve website <http://www.serve.gov> provides a search engine that enables military advocates and supporters looking for volunteer opportunities to enter a city and state location and get a list of organizations that are seeking volunteers. The website allows users to narrow searches to match the type of organizations or activities they desire to support.

UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMY:

STATE-BY-STATE SNAPSHOTS

"Understanding Our Economy," the sixth edition of the state-by-state snapshots issued by the Joint Economic Committee can be viewed at the following link:

http://jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=f18b678e-10a0-4e9e-a01c-1aa3606964d5

SFVAHCS SHOW –N– SHINE

The Sioux Falls Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System invites veterans of all eras, family, friends and the general public to their 10th Annual VA Show and Shine on Wednesday, July 20.

Area car and motorcycle owners will cruise to the VA Medical Center, and all vehicles are welcome – street rods, classic cars, and motorcycles. Registration and entrance are free. This event is intended for Veterans' and others' enjoyment.

Registration will be from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. at the medical center (2501 West 22nd Street).

Attendees will have the opportunity to vote for their favorite cars and motorcycles from 6:30 – 7:15 p.m.

Trophies will be awarded for Veterans' Choice, People's Choice, and Director's Choice.

Dash plaques will be available, first come – first served. Commemorative T-shirts and food will be available for purchase.

ADVOCATING FOR VETERAN'S SURVIVORS

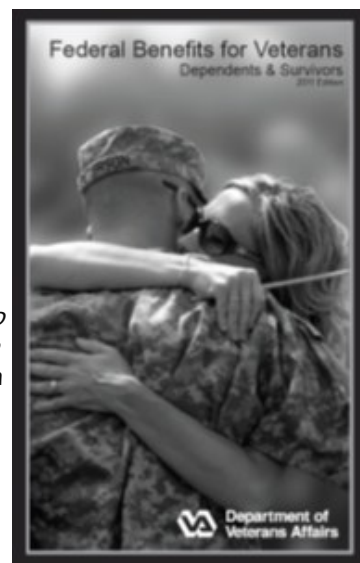
The Office of Survivors Assistance (OSA) was established in October of 2008, as an advisor to the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs on all matters related to policies, programs, legislative issues, and other initiatives affecting veterans' survivors and dependents.

OSA honors the commitment made to veterans and military members by serving as a resource regarding all benefits and services furnished by the VA to survivors and dependents of deceased veterans.

We are attaching a copy of OSA's resource brochures with this newsletter. These materials are also posted on the VSO website. Other resources available to assist you can be found at the links below.

- * The Department of Defense offers extensive services to the surviving family of servicemembers who die on active duty (<http://osd.dtic.mil/mapcentral/casualty.html>).
- * The Social Security Administration offers benefits to surviving family based upon the earnings history of the deceased (<http://www.ssa.gov/pgm/survivors.htm>).
- * The Office of Personnel Management extends veterans preference hiring status to the spouses and surviving spouses of active duty military, 100% disabled veterans and veterans killed in action or who passed due to a service-connected injury or illness (<http://www.fedshirevets.gov>).
- * Also, remember that the majority of VA benefits available to survivors and dependents are tax exempt. Information on this can be found on the IRS website (<http://www.irs.gov>).

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see right, let us strive to finish the work we are in; To bind up the nation's wounds; To care for him who has borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." (President Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865).



KEEP THE SPIRIT OF '45 ALIVE

COUNTDOWN TO AUGUST 14!

On August 14, 1945, World War II ended, marking the culminating moment of the greatest national effort in our history. "Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive" is a non-profit, non-partisan initiative to preserve the legacy of the men and women of the Greatest Generation so that their example of courage, self-sacrifice, "can-do" attitude and commitment to community can help inspire a renewal of national unity in America at a time when our country once again must come together to meet historic challenges.

KEEP THE
SPIRIT
OF '45
ALIVE!

August 14th has been established as an annual day of remembrance and na-



tional renewal to remind America of the values and accomplishments of the generation who endured the hard times of the Great Depression, fought to defeat the greatest tyranny in history, and then went on to rebuild their shattered world in an unprecedented effort to help assure a better future for both friend

and former foe alike.

It is a time for America to say "thank you" to those who served in uniform and those who supported them on the Home Front.

It is a time for all Americans to remember and reflect up the achievements of a generation that endured the difficult times of the Great Depression.

It is a time to honor the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice and never came home.

This year, on the 66th anniversary of that day, "Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive" is encouraging all Americans across the country to observe this anniversary. Complete details and a planning toolkit can be found at : <http://www.spiritof45.org/site/>.

It is our hope that our children and our children's children will always remember this generation and will continue to draw strength and inspiration from their example of national unity, cooperation, integrity, courage and selflessness as we face the challenges of today and the future.

HENRY RETIRES AS VABHHCS DIRECTOR

On July 2nd, Peter P. Henry, Director, VA Black Hills Health Care System, retired after 42 years of Federal service. He served as VA Black Hills Health Care System's Director since December 14, 2003. Prior to that, he served as Acting Director, Nebraska-Western Iowa VA Health Care System and Acting Director, VAMC Iowa City. He presided over the integration of the Fort Meade and Hot Springs VAMCs into the VA Black Hills Health Care System, serving as its first Director. From 2001 to 2003, he served as the full-time Director of the Extended Care and Rehabilitation Service Line for VISN 13 and VISN 23, a position he continued in as a collateral

duty until his retirement.

Prior to his initial appointment as Director, Fort Meade VA Medical Center in January, 1993, he served as Associate Director at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa, FL and as Assistant Medical Center Director at the VAMC Long Beach, CA. He joined the VA in 1970 as a Management Intern in VA Central Office in Washington, DC. He later served as Chief of Personnel Service at the Vancouver, Martinez, and Palo Alto VAMCs.

Mr. Henry received the Presidential Rank Award in both 1998 and 2010 and has received fourteen Executive Performance Awards since his appointment to the Senior

Executive Service. He was elected in 1999 to a three-year term on the national Board of the Senior Executives Association, and was re-elected to additional three-year terms in 2002 and 2005. He was also honored with an Exemplary Service Award from the Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary of Health. Mr. Henry is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and is proudly a third-generation VA employee.

Stephen DiStasio, VA Black Hills Health Care System Associate Director will remain in his current role and will serve as Acting Director until a new Director is appointed.

VETERANS JOB FAIR

On Wednesday, August 17, 2011, leaders from within the veteran community will host a job fair in Sioux Falls. The job fair will be held at the VFW (3601 S. Minnesota Avenue) from 10:00 am–2:00 pm.

Approximately 40-50 employers will be present, along

with leaders from the veteran network and staff from the SD Department of Labor and Regulation and the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. This job fair is open to active duty military, veterans, SDNG members and spouses.



VETERANS BENEFITS FAIR



On Monday, July 11, leaders from within the veteran network and state agencies participated in a Veterans Benefit Fair in Aberdeen. The Fair was held at the Aberdeen VFW from 2:00– 7:30 pm.

Steve Oliva, field officer for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, represented the Department at the Fair and assisted veterans in filing claims.

With over 3,700 veterans in Brown, Spink and Edmunds Counties, veterans were afforded the opportunity to find out if they were eligible for healthcare benefits, disability com-

pensation, pension, education, survivors benefits and much, much more.

VSOs Tom Gohn (Brown County), Ron Hoffer (Edmunds County) and Gordon Richards (Spink County, along with Kathy Schlecht, Brown Country VSO assistant,

responded to inquiries from the veterans.

Also participating in the Fair were representatives from the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, the SF VAHCS, and the local CBOC.



UPCOMING EVENTS

July 15—VSO Congressional Roundtable—10:00 am at Sioux Falls VA Health Care System.

July 20— 10th Annual Sioux Falls VA Health Care System Cruise Night—5:30 pm.

August 17—Veterans Job Fair—Sioux Falls VFW—10:00 am.

August 19—Stand Down at Ft Thompson Community Center—10:00 am.

August 29-31— VSO Annual Benefits School—Pierre Ramkota Hotel.

September 11—Patriot Day.

WOMEN VETERANS' PROGRAM GETS GRANT

The C-VISN program for homeless women veterans in Belle Fourche has received another \$50,000 grant from the John T. Vucurevich Foundation to help cover operating expenses as the new center gets into operation this fall.

The John T. Vucurevich Foundation awards grants to charitable organizations committed to helping the poor, distressed, under privileged, the advancement of the arts, education & science, and promotion of social welfare within South Dakota with preference given to the West River area and in particular the Black Hills Region.

It's founder, John T. Vucurevich was born in Yugoslavia in 1912, and at the age of eight immigrated to the United States, growing up in Lead, South Dakota. John was a successful banker for over 50 years, owning banks in Nebraska, North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin. He also served in both the South Dakota House of Representatives and Senate. He was an active supporter of higher education and was recognized by the University of South Dakota School of Business as the South Dakotan of the Year. Because of his support of higher education, John established several scholarship endowments throughout the state of South Dakota. He demonstrated a deep-seated concern for the future leadership of the United States and was interested in promoting young men and women as future leaders.

The project called "Women of War" is developing a housing and training complex on the north edge of Belle Fourche that will house 28 veterans and children. It is sanctioned and partially funded through a grant and per diem program through the Veterans Administration.

The Women of War Center is developing training and career counseling in cooperation with Black Hills State University and the South Dakota Department of Labor. The intent is to offer these veterans the training they need for the civilian employment marketplace so they can better care for themselves and their families.



JOHN T. VUCUREVICH FOUNDATION

...to make a piece of the world a brighter place.

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